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U.S. National Security Strategy for Engagement...The Missing Tier

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U.S. National Security Strategy for Engagement...The Missing Tier

The end of the Cold War has thrust the United States into a world that effectively rendered fifty years of a carefully crafted national security strategy obsolete. Over the past several years, political pundits, politicians, members of the defense establishment, and the White House have grappled with developing a coherent strategy to replace it. The result, *A National Security Strategy for a New Century*,¹ was issued in May 1997 and was followed almost immediately by its attendant National Military Strategy.² These companion documents recognize that the key to engaging New World complexities is to embrace a set of national security goals based on a set of integrated regional approaches.

Since the issuance of these complementary documents, the national security minded intelligencia have been debating the merits and short comings they embody in meeting the needs of the country. Few seem ready to declare that these documents are a complete success, however there also seems to be little consensus on what specifically must be done to improve them. In short, we all agree something seems amiss, but know not what. This paper will make the argument that nothing is seriously flawed in National Security Strategy or National Military Strategy. Rather, the problem lies in two very important missing elements of supporting security strategy and a lack of an operational construct for developing, testing, and evaluating it. Step one in this argument will be to propose an operational construct architecture that properly encapsulates the full range of strategic strata needed to support our National Security Strategy. Step two will be to

¹ "A National Security Strategy for a New Century," The White House, May 1997.

attempt to frame in the two missing elements to complete a fully functional strategic plan. The third and final step will be a proposal for testing and evaluating the effectiveness of the elements in the strategic plan.

The Character of National Security. The key to tackling an effective national security construct for the near future is recognizing the fundamental shift in underpinnings of our sense of security. Few would argue that what embodied our sense of security through the Cold War years was a fear of catastrophic nuclear attack on our homes and families. This threat had a heavy military hue not too different from threats of destruction by military instruments throughout the history of mankind. It was monolithic in character and as such simplified our focus on a security strategy aimed on thwarting its occurrence. Today, that monolithic threat has faded to the point of irrelevance. In its place, a sense of security founded on economic prosperity and protection from transnational threats such as drug addiction, terrorism, and organized crime has emerged. Like the de-militarization of our sense of security, the conceptual approach in our National Security Strategy has undergone a dramatic recrafting. The old stratagems of “massive retaliation, mutually assured destruction, and containment” have been replaced by a strategy of “engagement.” It is the new strategy of “engagement” that is the key to understanding the need for a new construct of national security strategy. This construct is a “National Security Strategy Pyramid.”

The Need for a National Security Construct. First, why worry about developing a construct for a family of national security strategies? We never seemed to need one before? The answer lies in the recognition that “engagement”, as a strategy is

² “National Military Strategy of the United States of America, Shape Respond Prepare Now: A Military Strategy for a New Era.” Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff 1997.

fundamentally different from the military centric strategies of the previous history. Its success lies more in the realm of details motivated by regional, cultural, and transnational factors than in monolithic or global threats of the Cold War. In short, “the devil is in the details.” It is the regionalism, recognition that classic military and diplomatic tools no longer are the only players in engaging the world, growing integrated economic fabric, and exploding information technology that are the key to success in today’s national security. The family of national security strategies required to meet these new needs must be developed to a level of fidelity that “engagement” mission tasks can be extrapolated. The broad-brush guidance of the National Security Strategy only fulfills the need for the top strata of what in reality is a three-tiered pyramid of strategies.

Why not merely adjust the National Security Strategy and National Military Strategy to include the level of detail needed to meet these new drivers? The answer to this question lies in the nature of American democracy. Development of top level guidance in modern America has blossomed into an industry that taps the finest minds available. The bureaucratic process, laced with two party politics and robust media engagement, stimulates the general broad-brushed nature of both the National Security Strategy and the National Military Strategy. Most importantly, this process drives consensus as a cornerstone requirement, which precludes detail as a characteristic. It is the mental rigor and the consensus in the National Security Strategy that are its strengths and make it relevant.

The National Security Strategy Pyramid. The National Security Strategy Pyramidal approach provides a means for capturing the relative orientation of all of the strategic elements needed in an effective national security strategy of “engagement.” The

pyramid has three distinct tiers of strategy, with each tier incorporating an ever-expanding level of fidelity needed to bridge national security guidance to the next level. The bottom tier must be developed to the level of detail needed to directly translate the national security strategy into “engagement” mission tasking.

The Top of the Pyramid; National Security Strategy. The top of the pyramid is reserved for the top level broad presidential guidance needed to provide executive branch departments with the general focus they need to execute their duties within the context of national security. Sections I and II of *A National Security Strategy for a New Century* do just that. Section I establishes the role of America as a world leader, identifies the major threats and opportunities, introduces the concept of engagement, and then gives broad implementation guidance.³ Section II provides the three core objectives for advancing U.S. national interests: enhancing security, promoting prosperity, and promoting democracy.⁴ This section provides enough detail to permit the departments to focus on areas within their purview without dictating too much of the “how.”

As an example, you will find the notions requiring integrated approaches and shaping the international environment are generally articulated under the core objective of enhancing security in the National Security Strategy. The strategic concept of shaping shows up as a major pillar in the National Military Strategy. In that second-tiered document, its strategic definition is refined and expanded within the tool bag of the Department of Defense.⁵ You should logically expect to see “shaping” show up as a major pillar in Department of State, Commerce, Education, Health, and Justice strategic documents and visions.

³ *A National Security Strategy for a New Century*, p. 1-2

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 5-20

The Second Tier: National Military Strategy et. al. The second tier of the national Strategy Pyramid is home to a family of supporting strategies that add two critical elements of character to the national security strategy as well as expanding the fidelity of strategic guidance derived from the National Security Strategy. It is also in this second tier that the first of the two missing elements of strategy identified at the outset of this article should reside. First, let us deal with the two critical elements of character: executive department uniqueness and the need for a regional focus.

The National Military Strategy is a classic second tier strategy document. As previously stated, it takes those portions of the National Security Strategy that the Department of Defense has prime responsibility for and expands the strategic concepts to encompass the unique character of the military instrument. It frames up the strategic environment to include regional dangers, asymmetric challenges, transnational challenges, and "wild cards." It goes on to pull down guidance from the National Security Strategy to meet the shaping and preparedness goals and expands the level of fidelity for use by the joint command structure and military departments in their own strategy guidance. Most importantly, it moves to define the national military objectives including providing some sense of priority. In short, it fills in the major details nicely, providing the unique character of the Department of Defense.

What are missing are similar strategic visions of the other executive departments. With the exception of the Department of State, who has some tradition in operating within the realm of national security, the need for development of a similar strategy that captures the unique character of the Departments of Commerce, Justice, Energy, Health, Education, and Transportation becomes essential to fully exploit the venue of

⁵ National Military Strategy of the United States of America,' p. 12

“engagement” in the post Cold World era. Each of these departments has some unique and particularly effective capabilities that are critical players within the realm of our new sense of security. The National Security Strategy takes significant pains to provide the capstone guidance for these capabilities.

For instance, the National Security Strategy specifically calls for the use of diplomacy and international assistance in its direction to be proactive in shaping the international environment. It talks about executing preventive diplomacy, reinforced by sustainable development programs that promote basic education, voluntary family planning, environmental protection, and the promotion of “rule of law” and good governance, all under the umbrella of “shaping.”⁶ Most of these activities are not within the direct purview of the Defense Department, but are direct concerns of the other executive departments. The National Security Strategy direction to execute “engagement” in an integrated approach requires each department to develop guidance for its field activities that are not only effective within their own context, but can be integrated at the next strategic tier.

The remaining tier II section and on par in importance with the executive department strategies is the infusion of a regional focus that is essential for effective “engagement” worldwide. Section III of the National Security Strategy is where this element is found. The “Integrated Regional Approaches” section is clear recognition that the tools of “engagement” must be carefully employed within the unique cultural, demographic, economic, and geographic character of specific regions. This regional guidance provides a structure for incorporating the wide ranging strategic concepts of the departments with the motivators and deterrence factors deep seated within the cultural

paradigms of regions and sub-regions. It also allows the entire national security strategy family to prioritize its focus on regions of vital interest to the U S.

The Third Tier: Missing. The forgoing discussion should have captured and grouped a significant set of strategic principles from the broad prose of the National Security Strategy to more detailed, but still largely general visions at the executive department level. The problem is that the bureaucratic process, top level focus, and process of consensus building, even within the departments still does not produce strategic guidance at the level of detail needed for translation into active "engagement" mission tasking. In short, there must be a third tier, a bridging tier, developed within the regional and sub-regional construct, below the bureaucratic consensus building activity that can extrapolate the notions of the second tier strategic guidance into a usable form. This is the second of the two missing elements promised at the outset of this discussion.

This third tier strategy set is actually a fully integrated list of strategic options available to influence U S interests in the region. These options are derived from the guidance provided by the tier two executive department strategy documents. It is also here, that the huge resources of U S based non-governmental organizations can infuse their unique capabilities. These elements can be used individually or in concert with one or more other elements on the list to meet the needs within a given region. As the strategic condition evolves, additional options can be pulled from the list and or elements that have not proven effective can be withdrawn.

As an example let us take the Western Hemisphere. The regional guidance provided by the National Security Strategy, Section III calls for combating the transnational threats represented by narcotics production and trafficking, organized

⁶ A National Security Strategy for a New Century," p. 7

crime, illegal immigration, and government instability caused by corruption and political conflict. It also calls for promoting continued economic growth in an area that represents a significant market for the U.S. It goes on to call for leveraging regional organizations like the Organization of American States (OAS) and Summit of the Americas to advance U.S. interests. A list of strategic “engagement” options for the regions might include U.S.-backed economic loans from the World Bank to promote economic development and meet emergent social needs, bilateral exchanges of law enforcement personnel to advance U.S. concerns in narcotics production/trafficking as well as providing a positive example of the role of law enforcement in society, Commerce Department sponsored education opportunities for South American businessmen, bilateral and multilateral exercises with U.S. military forces to strengthen the interoperability of forces, provide baseline training for developing nation forces, and providing a positive role model for civilian control of military forces, health information, providing inoculations, and contraceptive technique promotion, maritime quarantine patrols, demonstrations of armed force, military presence missions, utilization of port facilities and ship repair capabilities to promote local business, promotion of minimum education standards for children, women, and young adults, promotion and sponsorship of alternative agricultural crops to displace coca and poppy, etc.

To develop an “engagement” strategy for northern region of the South American Continent, a selection of options would be pulled from the list that are calculated to advance important U.S. interests. As time goes by or indications via assessment warrant, the strategy would be updated by adding other options and/or removing some that are not meeting expectations. The difficult challenge in this process is prioritizing U.S. interests,

predicting effects of a selected strategy and measuring its effectiveness. In short, some sort of assessment framework must be crafted to measure the effectiveness of the strategy, both as a whole and in parts.

An Assessment Framework. The proposal for providing a means of measure and prediction is to use a modified construct of the war gaming structure well established in the Defense Department. The key is look at the engagement goals of the National Security Strategy in a comparable light to the regional crisis condition used in war games. That is to say, there is a starting position that is recognized by analyzing conditions in the regions against the national security goals as established. There is an ending condition established by the national security goal. The "engagement game" would be executed by applying various options from the regional menu, analyzing the effect at steps along the way and adjusting as necessary. Once a course of action is determined, mission orders are distributed and options are applied to the region. Periodic analysis is then undertaken to measure the "real" effect. If it appears that the options are not producing the desired effect, the "engagement game" is adjusted with new options and run again. The cycle repeats as required.

How is the game applied to a region and who should the players be? In effect, every region would need a game construct that takes into account both regional needs and the global interactions that inevitably occur. The players must include diplomats, defense and commerce officials, governmental agencies such as USAID, CIA, and the FBI, non-governmental agency members that operate in the region, and regional cultural experts. There should be allowances for sub-level game cells to deal with limited issues as well as the ability to take a regional view as often as required. In regions like

East Asia and the Pacific, the game would be in near continuous operation, at least in sub-level cell activities. In less dynamic regions like the Western Hemisphere, it may suffice to execute the regional analysis on a periodic basis.

Conclusion. The key to a successful "engagement" strategy is recognition that it requires more than the traditional diplomatic and military instruments that were central to military centric security strategies of the past. It requires the same carefully crafted consensus at the macro level, but must also include the ability to bring all government and non-governmental organization tools to bear to positively influence world progress vis-à-vis U.S. interests. One of the biggest challenges is recognizing when strategic policy is being effective. Unlike military centric strategies that, for the most part, can be evaluated for success in terms of defended or taken ground or achievement of physical objectives, "engagement" success must be measured by developing a set metrics that can measure indications of tangibility. As important, it must be understood that policy application is a dynamic condition, effective for moments of passing time. "Engagement" demands continuous evaluation, re-crafting, monitoring, and then re-evaluation in order to be effective. There must be coherency in structure and process to do so. Hopefully, this paper has been effective in providing one idea for doing so.